

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter provides several points to be discussed including conclusion, limitation of study, and recommendations. The first to be presented is the conclusion of the findings and discussion which have been highlighted in the previous chapter. This part elaborates the answers for the formulated research questions of the study. Second to this is the explanation of the gaps in some areas which are covered in the limitation of the study. Last but not least, this part offers recommendations for teaching and learning practice as well as suggestions for future studies on politeness in students' request realizations.

5.1 Conclusions

This present study reports EFL students' politeness competence in the performance of request with hearers with different power and distance, as well as with different ranks of imposition. This study also examines the students' perceptions on the concept of politeness in the context of requesting with different social variables. Regarding those two research objectives, the present study which was conducted in tertiary level concludes several main findings.

With respect to the first objective, this study found that the students' politeness competence, which was determined by rating students' performances in three different request situations by the non-native English speakers, was acknowledged as somewhat appropriate with 3.3 as the mean score. This score was obtained by averaging the three mean scores from three request situations with 3.5 in Situation 1, 3.1 in Situation 2, and 3.2 in Situation 3. These results were influenced by the students' inability to produce contextually appropriate linguistic devices in given context. For instance, in request situation that involve a best friend as the interlocutor, the students utilized indirect strategies. Such strategies when used in a situation that was heavily marked by closeness and familiarity between participants will likely be perceived as overpolite (Leech, 2014). On the other hand, in request situation that includes a lecturer and that signifies asymmetrical relationship, some students employed linguistic devices that promote greater degree of directness. The strategies may be perceived as

inappropriate. By this, it can be concluded that the students' language production has not reached the expected language level which allows the students to use contextually appropriate language.

However, their perceptions on the concept of politeness in the context of requesting were in contrary with their politeness production mentioned above. The students perceived that polite request was highly relied on the situation or context of the interactions. The extent to which speaker should be direct or indirect was determined by social variables such as power, distance, gender, formality and informality of situation, and imposition. This implied that the students understand that politeness is context dependent.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that there is a gap between students' politeness comprehension and production. Their politeness knowledge was not actualized in their performances. Synthesized from the data, the students' native language norms as well as their linguistic inadequacy contribute to this difference. Considering the paramount role of politeness in EFL learning, teachers are required to provide learning opportunities that can acknowledge and resolve the students' shortcoming.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

This current study has some limitations which can be addressed in the future studies in similar area. First, this study was limited in term of politeness competence investigated. This study merely counted on the students' politeness production in spite of the fact that politeness competence can also be viewed from students' politeness comprehension (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Second, in determining students' politeness competence, this present study only examined the appropriateness of language use based on contextual variables (linguistic matters) without involving non-linguistic matters such as gesture or prosodic features which have been acknowledged to be equally important (Arndt & Janney, 1991).

The third limitation of the study was the politeness judgment which may raise different interpretation among researchers or anyone since the nature of politeness itself is relative to context and interlocutor. However, this present study has made an attempt to maintain the validity of the analysis by first synthesizing politeness rules and indicators from the theories, and second involving two other non-native raters to see correlation of the rating results.

Last but not least, the study has limitation that was related to data collection. As the study utilized role-play tasks as the instrument to elicit the data, there is a possibility that the students may not say what they would probably say in the real-life situation. However, this study has made an effort to make the request situations as authentic as possible by including the interlocutors that have real positions as stated in the situation e.g. the best friend of the participants.

5.3 Recommendations

This current study offers some pedagogical implications that can be considered by both teachers and students, as well as some suggestions for future research that concern with interlanguage politeness. In the light of pedagogical implications, this study outlines several points. First of all, as the result of the study showed that there were deviations of language use from the target language (e.g. the use of polite request strategies) in that the students are unable to use contextually appropriate language, improvement is clearly required. The practice of teaching and learning should make sure that such politeness competence is intensively developed in the formal classroom setting.

To this end, the teachers can promote conscious raising activities in that the teaching and learning process concerns with cultivating and raising students' awareness on socio-cultural norms of politeness realization in any communicative events (see Zhu, 2012). To support this practice, the teachers also can incorporate explicit teaching to make sure that the students comprehend the linguistic strategies and devices to realize polite speech acts. This is because, according to Tateyama (2001, p. 220), explicit teaching is considered "more effective than

implicit teaching in facilitating the acquisition of L2 pragmatic routines that require a higher formality of linguistic expression”.

Second, the teaching and learning process are not only influenced by the teacher’s teaching methodologies, but also by another crucial element such as teaching materials. Therefore, it is suggested that the textbooks which highlight the use of appropriate syntactical and lexical forms in relation to context are developed and designed for EFL learners. By this, the students may no longer incline to the conception that all politeness forms are formal and indirect.

Third, the students should be made aware that politeness is an integral part of their language proficiency and its existence during the communicative event is clearly fundamental. By having this awareness, it is expected that they pay attention to the practice of this pragmatic component and have the ability to recognize and produce language choices that are relevant to context of interactions and that go in line with the socio-cultural norms of the target language.

Fourth, the finding showed that the students’ comprehensive knowledge about politeness realizations in speech acts was not reflected in their language production. In the light of this finding, it is recommended for teachers to internalize the students’ metapragmatic awareness into practices. As it can be assumed that one of the factors contributing to the inconsistency was their language inadequacy, teachers can provide opportunities for students to practice the use of English linguistic expressions in simulated situations. This goal can be realized through the activities such as role play, discourse completion test, and etc.

With respect to future research, this study offers some recommendations which are generated from the aforementioned limitations of the study. First, as the current study concerned with only investigating the students’ politeness production, the future studies may combine both students’ language production as well as perception (comprehension) to account for their politeness competence. This may provide comprehensive evidence when measuring students’ pragmatic competence in general and politeness competence in particular.

Second, the future studies may expand the area of investigation beyond the scope of linguistic realizations in certain request situations. Instead, to account for more comprehensive students' politeness competence, the future studies are recommended to incorporate non-linguistic aspects as the point of examination. It is because non-verbal matters such as gesture, prosody, or even facial expression are considered to equally fundamental in realizing polite message (Arndt & Janney, 1991).

Third, in the present study the students' requests were rated and judged solely by the non-native English speakers. Consequently, the claim about the students' politeness competence may be different from that of made by the native speakers. Thus, future studies may expand the investigation by examining the students' politeness competence from the target language norms by involving native English speakers as the raters. Besides, future studies may also assess the students' politeness competence by comparing the ratings of both native or non-native English speakers. By this, more comprehensive decision about the students' politeness can be determined.

Last but not least, as the current study investigated the students' politeness competence under controlled situations (i.e. role play activities) and only in the performances of request, the future studies may examine the realization of politeness in different speech acts in real life situations. This ethnographic approach, despite its weakness, may capture how the students may realize politeness in naturally occurring context (Felix-Brasdefer, 2008). Thus, more reliable conclusion can likely be drawn.